

A
Funeral Sermon
ON THE
DECEASE
OF
Mrs. Johanna Brooks,
Late of *WANTAGE*,
Who Died *June* the Fourth, 1712.

By WILLIAM JONES.

L O N D O N,

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TO THE

R E A D E R.

THAT which occasion'd the Printing of this Discourse, was, partly that those Relations of the Deceased, who could not possibly be present to hear it at first, might have the Satisfaction to view and consider it afterwards; and partly to express the Respect that is due to those many Persons, who by their Attendance shew'd their Affection to the Deceased.

I have endeavour'd to present what was then deliver'd, as far as twas possible, by reviewing my Premeditations on this Subject, and recollecting what I had further added in discoursing on it: The principal Parts are the same, and those Sentences

To the READER.

that are omitted, are supply'd by others of the like Design and Use.

I hope the reading thereof will be no ways disagreeable to any, especially to those who were present at the hearing of it. And if, thro the Divine Blessing, it prove useful to them who are pleas'd to read over and consider it, I have obtain'd my Purpose ; which was to improve the Death of one, so as (if it might be) to promote the Eternal Salvation of many.

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and to noisiness. Many a time have I seen a
twelveth part of a week pasted over
one of olden times, and a T and a C. and
name of a man, all in to get it to go on.

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Mrs. Johanna Brooks.

ISAIAH XL. 6.

The Voice said, Cry; and he said, What shall I cry? All Flesh is Grass, and all the Goodliness thereof is as the Flower of the Field.

IN the former Verses you have the Prophet foretelling the Ministry of John the Baptist, who came before our Saviour to prepare his way, Luke iii. 2, 3, 4, 5, and to fit the People, by the preaching of Repentance, for the Reception of the Blessings of the Gospel. The 5th Verse contains a wonderful Discovery which should be made of the Glory of God in Christ, in respect both to his Incarnation, Doctrine

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Doctrine and miraculous Acts, as also to his Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven : for tho
Luke iii. 6. these Particulars are not therein mention'd, yet the Glory of the Lord was marvelously display'd in them all, as it was also in the general Manifestation of his Mercy and Salvation to the World which follow'd them. Our Text has in it a very seasonable Representation of the Frailty of all Flesh, and a solemn Order that it should be publish'd.

First, We have a Representation of the Frailty of *All Flesh*, which is here said to be as *Grass*, and all its Goodliness as the Flower of the Field. This I shall insist on, by shewing you how you are to understand these Terms, *All Flesh*, and the Goodliness thereof. And,

Secondly, in what respects these are as Grass, and as the Flower of the Field.

First, By all flesh, in this place, are meant all Men, as will evidently appear, if you consider the 5th and 7th Verses. And by the Goodliness thereof (that I may not trouble you with the various Versions of the original word) is intended every Endowment of Man; or as the Apostle Peter (after the Septuagint) renders it, *All his Glory*; i.e. whatever he may value himself upon, or others admire him for. And this may be consider'd either as his relative, viz. his Wealth and Preferment in the World; or as 'tis personal, namely, the Gracefulness and Excellencies of either his Body or Mind.

And this is to be understood of all Mankind as in the State of fallen Nature, and as destitute of the renewing Influences of Divine Grace; for so this Term often signifies; as when our Saviour tells us, *Joh. iii. 7.* That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Which Interpretation of this word is farther confirm'd by the Opposition the Apostle makes, in citing this Text, between all *Flesh* as born of corruptible Seed, and the incorruptible Seed of the Word of God, whereby true Christians are born again. For these, notwithstanding the Imper-

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Imperfections which attend them here, have Dispositions in them that are really excellent and divine, and which are the more to be valu'd, as being the Pledges of that glorious Perfection which was design'd them by God in their Conversion to him, and is aim'd at by themselves in a holy Practice.

This likewise extends to Man in his most flourishing Circumstances, that is, consider'd amidst all the Beauty which can concur to adorn him, and as fortify'd with all the Power which may tend to secure him: For as the Psalmist assures us, *Man in his best, viz. in his most establish'd Estate, is altogether Vanity.* And this will further appear, if you consider,

Psalm
xxxix. 5.

Secondly, In what respects *All Flesh is Grass, and all the Goodliness thereof is as the Flower of the Field.*

1st. *All Flesh is Grass, &c.* in respect to its Growth and Flourishing; for we are nourish'd, and receive the Increase of our Stature as the tender Herbage of the Field, *viz.* by the repeated Blessings of the Earth and Heavens: Our Life is supply'd by the same radical Moisture and digesting Heat, and we are no more able to live without the Influences of the Sun, and the natural Relief we receive from the Earth in our Food, than the most feeble Plants. We are also, thro this our natural Frailty, liable to as many Dangers, while we are growing up, as they; and enjoy a constant Course of Preservation, as well as of Provision, before we arrive at years of Maturity. The merciful Providence of our Maker, which regards the least Parts of his Creation, watches over us even then, when we are employing the hours of our Childhood in mean and despicable things. Had it not been thus, those of us who are living had never arriv'd to this degree of Age; and those who are now deceas'd, must long before have drop'd into the Grave.

2d. In respect to its End and Perishing; and that in a twofold Sense.

i. As it is liable to fade while standing: For as the Apostle James tells us, *The Sun is no sooner risen with a Burning-Heat, but it withers the Grass, and the*

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the Flower thereof falleth, and the Fashion of the Grace of it perishes. Thus we frequently see Persons outlive their Splendor, and wither as the Grass, even while it keeps the Field. Our Excellencies are often blasted long before we die, either thro' Sickness, Adversity or Old Age. The pleasing Features which reign in our Countenances, are soon marr'd by the Violence of some Disease; and then the Beauty, that is so much admir'd, consumes away like that of a fading Flower. The Order and Liveliness of our Thoughts are soon spoil'd by the ruffling Waves of Affliction, which at one time or another all are obnoxious to, especially if we are assaulted with such Troubles as more immediately seize the Mind, or by their Continuance posses it with an habitual Care and Dejection: For tho' the Spirit of a Man may sustain his Infirmitiy, yet a wounded Spirit who can bear? And this may prove so much the more tedious to us, thro' that Jollity of Humour we enjoy'd before; for it's commonly to be observ'd, that those who in Prosperity us'd to be extravagantly cheerful, are in Adversity the most impatient and dejected. But how long soever we escape or hold out against these, we must at last resign to Age, which in time, wears out every human Beauty, and reduces the strongest Powers of our Souls, by insensibly undermining the lowest Foundations of our Nature. We may read this in the aged Ruins of those, whom we, perhaps, have formerly admir'd for the flourishing Endowments of their Minds, or the remarkable Gracefulness of their Persons; who are now, thro' the Decays of Old Age, become the Objects of general Compassion: for I hope none of us are so weak, as to think the pure Effects of that can render any Person justly contemptible; for whatever Splendor we live in for the present, and whatever Health and Ease we now enjoy, 'tis not impossible that many of us may pass thro' a long Course of Sickness, Poverty and Weakness before we die; during which, we may appear so unlike to what we are now, as we are not willing to think it is possible for us to be.

Prov.
xviii. 14.

2. As it's liable to be cut off while it is flourishing, Death mows down the Young as well as the Old, and generally more perish by its almost sudden Stroke, than by the slow Decays of Life: And so far is the most prosperous State of Health from securing them, that Persons are often nearest their Fall, when in the highest Glory: as the Grass, when it is most flourishing, is nearest the Mower's Scythe; and as a Flower, in its utmost Beauty, is nearest the Hand of the Gatherer.

As also in respect to our Impotency to withstand the Blow of Death: All our Ability in this Case being no more than that of Grass, which how stubborn soever some of it be, must, as well as the weaker, yield to the Edg of the Scythe, and to the Force of the Mower's Arm. Persons of the hardiest Constitutions must fall, when he strikes them, as certainly, if not as speedily as those of fainter Dispositions: *What Man is he that liveth, and shall not see Death? Shall he deliver his Soul from the Hand of the Graue?* Selah. This is very elegantly set forth 48.

by Job in these words: *And surely the Mountain falleth, and cometh to nought, and the Rock is removed out of his Place: The Waters wear the Stones, thou walkest away the things which grow out of the Dust of the Earth, and thou destroyest the Hope of Man: Thou prevailst for ever against him, and he passeth; thou changest his Countenance, and sendest him away.* The Firmness of our Tempers, and the Hope we place therein, whenever our Time is come, will only render the irresistible Power of Death the more sensible and surprizing. This terrible Enemy of human Nature shews his Power most in such Constitutions, and raises his highest Trophies on the Tombs of those, who have glory'd in their Strength while living.

Lastly, *All Flesh is Grass, &c.* in respect to the short time of its Standing, and the utter Abolishment of all its natural Glory at Death. Our Continuance on Earth is very brief and transitory, if we compare it with the Duration of this World, which we are born and die in, or with that everlasting

To

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Job xiv. lasting State we are all of us hastening to : *Man that
is born of a Woman is of few Days ; he cometh up
like a Flower, and is cut down ; he fleeth also as a
Shadow, and continueth not.* Which the Psalmist ex-
presses thus, *As for Man, his Days are as Grass, and
as a Flower of the Field, so he flourisheth ; for the
Wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the Place
that knew it shall know it no more.* And when we de-
part, our Excellencies, which are personal, generally go with us into Darkness and Oblivion ; but the
Wealth and Honour we posses'd on Earth are left be-
hind us to be enjoy'd by others. Thus all our Glory,
like our Lives, is *as a Vapour, that appears for a lit-
tle season, and then vanishes away.* It's true in-
deed, the Memory of the Worth of some Persons
survives their Fall for many Ages ; but this is not en-
joy'd by them after Death, tho' the Prospect thereof
pleas'd them while living. And altho' the Honour of
a surviving good Name, even on Civil accounts, is
rather to be desir'd than despis'd, yet is it not im-
mortal : For notwithstanding it continues a long
while, yet must it end at the Period of the present
State of things ; for as in conjunction with Spiritua-
lity and true Devotion it might flourish for ever, so
without these it will make no Figure, nor afford us
any Enjoyment at all in the future State ; because
therein only those things will be accounted honoura-
ble and glorious to us, in which we have done the
1 John ii. Will of God, and acted from Principles truly vir-
17. tuous and divine. We come now to the

Second Part of this Text, the solemn Order to pub-
lish the universal Frailty of Man. *The Voice said,*
*Cry ; and he said, What shall I cry ? All Flesh is
Grass, &c.* I shall treat of this only, by shewing
you the Reasons that are to be render'd for the so-
lemn Proclamation of what is here asserted. And
these are, because

1. The prevailing Opinion of our own Excellen-
cies prevents our Reception of the Blessings of the Gol-
pel-Dispensation, to which this Place does, as has been
said, especially relate ; for the more we are conceited
of

of our own Endowments, the less we think we need those invaluable Favours which are proffer'd us in Christ. There is none among us who has not a Desire in general of being happy; we all place our Felicity in something that is most agreeable to our Dispositions and present Sense of things, which is the constant Rule by which we either chuse, or else refuse them. How then shall we be able to receive Salvation and eternal Bliss, thro' the Dignity and Merit of another, if we retain a reigning Opinion of our own? How shall we desire and seek, as we ought, the Glories and Delights of the Heavenly World, while we place our Happiness in the Grandeur and Pleasure of this? It is the high Esteem Persons have for the Honours and Pleasures of this present Life, which makes them defy the Almighty, and bid him depart, which prevents their desiring *to Job xxi.* *know his Ways,* and causes them to despise those humble and fervent Addresses which are necessary to their being happy. 'Tis the Opinion of their own Excellencies which teaches them to reject their Saviour's Righteousness, while they establish their own; *Rom. x. 3.* and to give large and florid Commendations to human Virtues, while they contemn divine and inward Operations. It's the Conceit of their natural Beauty which hinders their regard to that Virtue and Grace which is wanting for the Ornament of their Souls; and the immoderate Love of Earthly Substance, which renders them negligent of *laying up Treasures Mat. vi.* *in Heaven:* For their Minds are so crowded and posseſſ'd of worldly Objects, that they are even prejudic'd against the very Thoughts of pursuing those which are less agreeable to their Inclinations, tho' infinitely more capable of making them great and happy. Wherefore as our Creator proposes to us the Blessings of his Gospel, so he would have those hurtful Notions of things confuted, which tend to prevent our Acceptance of them: He will in Mercy have our Frailty proclaim'd to us, that we may not, by placing our Affections on the Vanities of this transitory Life, deceive our selves of the Glorious Enjoyment of that which is Eternal.

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Zech. ii.
13.

1 Cor. i.
29, 30, 31.

2. Because the more the Glory of God is display'd in the World, the more should all Men be abas'd; When he rises up out of his Holy Habitation, all Flesh ought to be silent, and all its Beauty veil'd before his Presence. And 'tis his particular Design in the Discovery made of his Wisdom and Righteousness in the Redemption of Man, That no Flesh should glory in its own Excellencies; but as it is written, He that glorieth, might glory in the Lord. The brighter the Manifestations of the Divine Perfections are, the more they are to be ador'd; for the Obligation to the Admiration of them still increases, with the degrees of our Knowldg, and so likewise does the Guilt of our Contempt of them. The inordinate Affectation of worldly Greatness, and the Disdain of the brightest Parts of the Christian Revelation, that is now to be found among those who bear the Christian Name, does utterly contradict the Design of God in blessing them with such Discoveries, and are some of the most capital Crimes that Persons can be guilty of. And to what are these owing more than to the false Opinions they retain of their own Excellencies, and their Ignorance and Insensibility of that Gulph of Sudden Ruin, into which the highest and brightest of Mortals are fallen; and wherein, unless the awful Grace of God prevent, they are eternally safe to perish? It's therefore fit that the lofty Thoughts of Men should now be level'd, and their mistaken Opinions of themselves, which support their Pride, corrected; that they may not only seek to be truly happy, but may also return the Homage of Love and Praise, which the highest Manifestation of his Glory, in their Eternal Salvation, justly calls for.

3. This solemn Order to proclaim the Frailty of Man may be consider'd as owing to (or at least as occasion'd by) the Obstinacy of the false and destructive Opinions, which, in this respect, we have all of us entertain'd, and which render the most awful Assurances and repeated Publications thereof necessary for us; for we are all apt to be partial in the Judgment of our selves. If we but suppose any Excellency

lency in us, 'tis very hard work for others to shew us our Mistake, and for our selves to submit to the contrary Conviction. And how much more must it needs be so, when there is some natural Lustre which attends us, which tho' it be infinitely short of the future Glory, and utterly incapable of rendering us happy, does nevertheless entertain and please us for the present? 'Tis therefore very requisite for us that we should hear the solemn and repeated Proclamations of our own Frailty: And to this purpose every Minister should, with the Royal Preacher, set the Vanity of all these admir'd Objects before us, and reason with us as the Psalmist does (in a Case somewhat different) *How long, O ye Sons of Men, will ye love Vanity, and seek after leasing?* For tho' we are too intent in our pursuit of Earthly Things to come off at a single Call, and too conceited of our own Endowments to be convinc'd at the first Representation of our Frailty; yet if we are earnestly and frequently apply'd to, 'tis possible we may be affected with Conviction, and those Endeavours may take effect when they are often renew'd, which when they were us'd first, had hardly Force enough to render them perceiv'd: Whereas, on the other hand, were we left to these our Opinions, they would never vanish of themselves. Should they be negligently attack'd, they would despise the Attempt; for the lofty Imaginations of Men are like well-fortify'd Garisons, which if they be not assaulted with regular and renew'd Force, will still remain entire, and disdain to yield. Upon this account it is that *Wisdom cries without, and lifts up her voice in the Street, in the chief Places, in the opening of the Gates, and in the City;* offering the Intuitions of her Spirit, and the Rewards of Attention together: All which Endeavours are needful, tho' they're not always effectual; because tho' all are not prevail'd on by them, yet few or none are turn'd to God without them.

Having thus briefly done with the Parts of this ext, I come now to the Application of them in the improvement of the whole.

First,

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First, This furnishes you with a very profitable Meditation when you walk the Fields, and view the Beauty of its Herbs and Flowers, *viz.* That as all the flourishing Products of Nature you look on will e'er long be mow'd down, wither'd and carry'd away, so must the People of this present Age be all at length mow'd down by the Scithe of Time, and gather'd into the Grave. And tho' some Families may (like some Roots) send forth a Supply of new Successors, and derive their Titles to a long Posterity; yet according to the Course of Things they also fail, and are at last extinguish'd. In the same Places where we now live, and in the same or like Employments, which take up so much of our precious Time, our innumerable Ancestors pass'd away their transitory Days of Life before us. And when we have stood our Time, we must likewise leave these Fields, *and the Places that know us now will know us then no more.*

Psal. ciii.
16.

And if Persons were as apt to be serious as they are to be vain, and were really as wise and considerate as they would have others think they are, what a happy mixture of Pleasure and Profit would such occasional Meditations as these afford them? They might easily reap such a valuable Harvest, as would do them much more good than the Possession or Revenues of all the Fields they look on.

2ly. If *all Flesh be Grass, and all the Glory thereon be as the Flower of the Field,* then what do we so much admire in our selves or in others? To what purpose, and with what reason do we bestow our precious Affections on such perishing Objects? Why, as the Wiseman argues with the worldly man, *Do we set our Eyes on that which is not?* which in respect to it Uncertainty and future Non-existence, and in comparison with those things that are of an everlasting Duration, may be said not to be. What do we more in admiring thus our own Excellencies, or those of our Relations or Friends, than Persons who walk in their Gardens, and admire and talk of the pretty Flowers they have in them; which tho' they implant their Thoughts so much to day, may be wither'd and gather'd to morrow? Should not this Consideration

Prov.
xxiii. 5.

prev

prevail with us to moderate our Affections to these perishing Enjoyments of our present Life, and to seek those Heavenly Beauties and Delights which will never fail us? If indeed we had not Faculties capable of higher things, and were not inform'd of the withering Disposition of these, it would not be so strange a Matter that we should be so taken with the one, and so little affected with the other. But since we have the Vanity of those, and the transcendent Excellency of these so plainly set before us, our own Reason will at last condemn us, if we make an unhappy Choice; and 'twill appear a Crime unpardonable even to our selves, and such as we shall never be able to forgive, if we shall content our selves with the deluding Gaieties of this present Life, at the same time when we have all the unexpressible Glories of the Eternal World set before us, as possible to be obtain'd, if they are really desired, and as certainly to be enjoy'd, if they are duly sought.

And this seems to be the use the Apostle designs in citing this Text, for he had just before exhorted the Christians, to whom he wrote, *to a pure and fervent Love one of the other*, as such who were born ^{1 Pet. 2, 22, 23.} of God, and Partakers of the same Principles of Religion and true Virtue: And he then adds the Consideration of this very Subject as a reason to enforce his Advice, *For all Flesh is Grass, and all the Glory of Man is as the Flower of Grass; the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* As if he had said, You have reason to love and value one another as Christians; that is, to be spiritual and heavenly in your Affections: For all the Excellencies you behold in others are perishing; but those Divine Dispositions, which have been produc'd in you by the Word of God, and which justly render you the Objects of your own mutual Love, will endure for ever. This is likewise the Apostle John's Argument, *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World; for all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of* ^{1 John ii. 15, 16, 17.}

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of Life, is not of the Father, but is of the World: And the World passeth away, and the Lust thereof; but he that doeth the Will of God, abideth for ever, &c. This Consideration of Man's Frailty, and of the approaching Ruin of all his natural Glory, should excite us to look after those Qualifications and Endowments, which will render us happy and glorious after Death. This is the proper Result of what has been said on this occasion, if it be duly practis'd; and I should make but a very imperfect Improvement of it, should I neglect to direct you into the true Method of obtaining the Glories above, after I have endeavour'd to show you how much you are mistaken in the vast Esteem you have for things below. I shall therefore propose to you what is needful, in order to this great and worthy End: And that you may not miss of it, I must take the liberty of acquainting you, that you can never arrive at the splendour and Blessedness of the next Life, except you seek it according to those Rules the Holy Scriptures afford you: For as no human Discovery has yet reveal'd to us what the future Happiness of good Men shall be, so neither can it set before us the way wherein it is to be enjoy'd; for the clear Manifestation of them both is owing to the

2 Tim. i. 10. Doctrines and Revelation of Jesus Christ, who hath abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to Light thro' the Gospel. And therefore, if we

would be really wise and happy, it's necessary, in the first place, that we are prevail'd on to entertain a singular Esteem for the Word of God; for this is the certain Voice of our Maker and Redeemer: And therefore if we hearken to, and strictly obey it, we cannot fail of being happy and glorious; and that (as the wise Master-BUILDER directs) I may begin at the Foundation, I must

i. Direct you to Christ. For as all the Lustres of human Nature are blasted by its Sins, so the ruinous Effects of our Transgressions can no other way be prevented, than by the meritorious Atonement of our Saviour's spotless Sacrifice. His Dolors only can render us blessed, and nothing less than his Humiliation

tion can raise us to a State of Glory: *For he was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities; the chastisement of our Peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* According to the Terms of the Gospel, 'tis not possible for us to be sav'd, unless we are so far persuaded of our Misery, and of our want of real Worth to recommend us to God, as to resign our selves to him thro the Righteousness of the Mediator, and to admire and acknowledg the Grace that saves us. If we are not thus far humbled, we are as yet too righteous in our own Eyes to be justify'd, and too proud to be really great. We are therefore to use particular Care, that we aspire towards Glory on the Wings of a sincere and active Faith in Christ; for nothing of a lower nature than this will carry us to Heaven. It may indeed bear us very high in our own Coneit: but there is this one Unhappiness which attends it, that it will after all leave us in danger of being thrust down into Hell: *For we may as well think to be glorious without any Righteousness at all of our own, as without that of the holy and ever-blessed Jesus;* it being a very unreasonable Thought, as well as a dangerous Mistake, for us sinful and imperfect Creatures to imagine that God will accept of our Obedience as his Service, while we refuse that of his Son as our Shelter and Salvation.

2. It is necessary to our Happiness and Glory that we are born again; *for without this, our Saviour assures us, we cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Unless our Natures are rectify'd and renew'd by the sacred Influences of his Spirit, we can't possess one single Endowment that will prove immortal; for, as we have said already, all the Lustres of human Nature are (like it self) imperfect, stain'd and perishing things. We are very much out if we suppose we can, by the mere Exercise of our disorder'd Faculties, regain the Sanctity and original Glory which belongs to Man; the restoring the Divine Image in us is the brightest, if not the greatest Part of our Salvation in Christ; he died for this

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very end, that we thro his Death might be bleſſ'd with the renewing Spirit. To conceive we can arrive at a pious and holy Temper without that, is a Notion that better became Heathens than it does Christians; for it was a Maxim of some of their celebrated Teachers, that their Goodness was of their ſelves, and their Virtue not from God: Which I doubt was in one Sense too true as to them, and which Opinion, if it ſhould be retain'd, would certainly prove fatal to us; because all the Excellency we can attain to, without being beholden to the Grace of God, will never pass for ſufficient Goodness and Virtue at his Tribunal, or qualify us to enjoy his Kingdom. How much then are they to blame,

Heb. x.

29.

and of what dreadful Ingratitude are they guilty, who despise the Spirit of Grace, and all its effectual and blessed Influences, which are design'd to set free and exalt the Souls of Men into that Happiness and Dignity, which, without them, they could never attain to? which, if ever they would obtain, they are bound to beg them of God with ardent and frequent Addresses; and which, if they would leave to themselves any possibility of obtaining Mercy, it is their Wisdom not to blaspheme and revile.

3. If we would obtain the Lustres and Felicities of the next and everlasting Life, we must live in the Practice of Piety towards God, and of Righteousness and Mercy towards Man in this. And upon this account it is that the Apostle Peter joins them twice together in one Sentence, *According as his Divine Power hath given us all things that pertain unto Life and Godliness, thro the knowledg of him who hath call'd us to Glory and Virtue.* They are very much mistaken who first ſtrive to excel others in worldly Grandeur, and then think themselves as much above them in Worth, as they are beyond them in Estate and Figure. Alas, these are but mean things to real Glory! The Meekness of a Man's Temper, the Sanctity of his Soul, his Devotion towards God, and his Charity to Man, exalt him as much above ſuch vain Pretenders to Glory, as the Brightness of the Sun is beyond the little Lustres of

2 Pet. i.

3.

a Glow-worm. These make any Person justly venerable here, and will crown him with Honour hereafter : These, according as they prevail in him below, will fit him to enjoy a deeper Relish of the Pleasures of Heaven, and a brighter Diadem of its Glories, when all the painted Appearances of this World are for ever vanish'd, and the true Worth of good Men shines forth like the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.

4. If we would arrive at the more advanc'd and illustrious Excellencies of Religion, we must begin to be good betimes, and devote our early Bloom to the Service of our glorious Maker ; who, as he values all the good Endowments he has bestow'd on his Creatures, and will call us to account how we have employ'd them ; so he has an especial Pleasure in them, when they are devoted to his Use and Honour. There is nothing which looks more charming than Virtue does in Youth ; for then the Fruits of Righteousness are brought forth in their first and best Season ; the Piety of young People being, as the Wiseman speaks of a Word fitly spoken, *like Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver.* By this means we shall have that Opportunity which is necessary for the gradual Improvement of our selves in solid Knowledg and Experience. This will render the Verdure of our growing Years immortal, so that no Decays of Age will be able to efface it ; nay, the Crown of Glory we may wear in Old Age will be

Prov.xvi.

31.

Prov.xvii.

1 Kings xviii. 12.

the more illustrious for the Graces of our Youth. This will make our Account the more honourable for us hereafter, and will be to our eternal Satisfaction as well as Glory, *to have fear'd the Lord, with Obadiah, from our Youth :* and to have shew'd our Love to God and Goodness, by renouncing the sinful Vanities of this World, *when we had most Temptation, Opportunity and Power to enjoy them.*

5. This affords particular Matter of Advice to those of us who are arriv'd at the declining Days of our Life ; such Persons may read the Truth of this Assertion in their own Decays, in the present Loss

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very end, that we thro his Death might be bless'd with the renewing Spirit. To conceive we can arrive at a pious and holy Temper without that, is a Nation that better became Heathens than it does Christians; for it was a Maxim of some of their celebrated Teachers, that their Goodness was of themselves, and their Virtue not from God: Which I doubt was in one Sense too true as to them, and which Opinion, if it should be retain'd, would certainly prove fatal to us; because all the Excellency we can attain to, without being beholden to the Grace of God, will never pass for sufficient Goodness and Virtue at his Tribunal, or qualify us to enjoy his Kingdom. How much then are they to blame, and of what dreadful Ingratitude are they guilty, who despise the Spirit of Grace, and all its effectual and blessed Influences, which are design'd to set free and exalt the Souls of Men into that Happiness and Dignity, which, without them, they could never attain to? which, if ever they would obtain, they are bound to beg them of God with ardent and frequent Addresses; and which, if they would leave to themselves any possibility of obtaining Mercy, it is their Wisdom not to blaspheme and revile.

3. If we would obtain the Lustres and Felicities of the next and everlasting Life, we must live in the Practice of Piety towards God, and of Righteousness and Mercy towards Man in this. And upon this account it is that the Apostle Peter joins them twice together in one Sentence, *According as his Divine Power hath given us all things that pertain unto Life and Godliness, thro the knowledg of him who hath call'd us to Glory and Virtue.* They are very much mistaken who first strive to excel others in worldly Grandeur, and then think themselves as much above them in Worth, as they are beyond them in Estate and Figure. Alas, these are but mean things to real Glory! The Meekness of a Man's Temper, the Sanctity of his Soul, his Devotion towards God, and his Charity to Man, exalt him as much above such vain Pretenders to Glory, as the Brightness of the Sun is beyond the little Lustres of

*Heb. x.
29.*

*2 Pet. i.
3.*

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of all those Endowments they might some years past have glory'd in. And why don't you as well read, in these plain Declensions of your Age, the approaching Stroke of Death, which in a little while will entirely cut you down? Does not the want of your former Beauty and Vigour assure you, that all the Excellencies that are yet with you, will likewise wither one after another, and leave you at last without any remaining Ornament, to the Ruins of the Grave? And if you have not obtain'd what is necessary for your future Happiness, how wretched a Condition are you like to die in! having no other Delight or Glory, but that which will vanish with your Breath. Is this the Fruit of so much Time you have had in the World, and of so many Opportunities for your everlasting Advantage, which you have enjoy'd, that after all you should leave it destitute of whatever is truly good and glorious? Oh let it be your next and immediate Care to prevent this Unhappiness! Endeavour to secure your Souls now without delay, even before they are for ever lost. The most numerous Days of your Lives are already fled away, and the small and uncertain Remnants of them will soon come to an end. You have but little time at most (and 'tis well if it ben't too little) to prepare for Death; but you have a whole Eternity to bewail your Folly in, if you miss of being happy. And who can die more miserable than an aged Man under the Guilt of all his Sins? And who has us'd the Length of his Days, which God in Mercy afforded him, that he might prepare himself to die, only to gratify the Flesh, and to treasure up Wrath, unto himself, against the Day of Wrath?

I shall, now in the close, address my self particularly to you who are young, and in the bloom of your Days: For you especially may be understood by these Terms, and intended in this Text; because you are indeed as so many fair and upright Flowers, delightful to the Eye, and Ornaments to the Earth. And because you are yet unacquainted with

with any Infirmitiy of Body, and Strangers to any inward Heaviness or Sorrow; you are apt to forget the Duty you owe to your Maker, and remember not the things which belong to your own Eternal Good. What has been said should prevail on you not to admire your selves, nor presume on the Vigour and Health you now enjoy. You see, by this Instance, how slight a Foundation your present Ease and Prosperity is, for the hopes of a long and happy Life. 'Tis true, it is the general Custom of young People to look on the Time of Adversity as very unlikely to befall them, and to think of the Hour of Death as of a thing at very great distance; but how often have they been deceiv'd and cut down in the midst of all their Security, and Expectation of Ease and Pleasure! And why may not any of you drop as suddenly into the Grave as others? What Assurance have you which they had not? Are we not all alike mortal? Since, as Job tells us,

One dies in his full Strength, being wholly at Ease Job xxi;
and Quiet; his Breasts are full of Milk, and his 23, 24,
Bones are moisten'd with Marrow; another dies in 25, 26.
the Bitterness of his Soul, and never eateth with Plea-
sure: they shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the
Worms shall cover them.

You have, among many others, this one Example more, how soon the clear Morning of your Days may of a sudden be veil'd with the Clouds of Sickness, or totally eclips'd by the gloomy Shades of Death. When you see a Person so hastily cut down, like a Flower in the midst of all her flourishing Beauty, how can any of you promise your selves a long Continuance here? How can you satisfy your selves, without a well-founded and comfortable Hope, that you are fit to die? One would think that it should not be in the power of all the Vanities and Amusements of your Youth, to produce and continue such a strange Security in you, when your Lives are so very uncertain, and while your Souls are in so much danger.

Permit me, if I can, to affect your Hearts with the Consideration of both the Goodness and Civility

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lity of her Disposition who is now deceas'd (which was such as entitled her to the general Esteem of those who knew her) as also to acquaint you with those Passages of her Sicknes, which may afford you Instruction.

When I came to her first, I found her very sensible of the Worth of that time she had enjoy'd in the World, and much concern'd that she had not been more industrious in the Improvement thereof. She was also under very weighty Apprehensions of her Sins, and us'd many Expressions which shew'd her Hatred and Dislike of them. When I perceiv'd this, I made it my Care to direct her to Christ, and the many Promises of Mercy and Salvation which are made in him, to those who sincerely repent and believe: But she did not at first receive what I offer'd in this Case with that Satisfaction, because she fear'd, as she said, that her's was a Sick-Bed Repentance. But when I came to her again, and ask'd her how she did; she answer'd, I am endeavouring to get my Soul nearer and nearer to Christ. To which I answer'd, That she could not employ her Thoughts in a better Work. She after this told me, That she rely'd on Christ for the Salvation of her Soul, and that she had obtain'd better Satisfaction; tho' she had often express'd her Desire to live, that she might manifest a sincere Repentance, and on no other account as she said but this; yet at length she declar'd she was willing to submit to the Will of God, even in Death. And indeed she seem'd to desire and delight in Prayer to the last day of her Life, tho' the Prevalence of her Disease render'd her uncapable to attend it, by reason of those frequent Slumbers she fell into. Many were the sensible Expressions that I at times had from her, tho' faintly and imperfectly deliver'd; some whereof were attended with such Intimations of Respect, and of Love to that which is good, that they very much mov'd my Heart. And what further confirms our comfortable Hope of her Happines, is, That some Persons, who were particularly conversant with her some time before her Sicknes, say, That she was very religiously dispos'd, and

and given much to Reading and good Discourse. 'Tis therefore to be hop'd with Comfort, as well as in Charity, that tho', like a beautiful Flower, she is wither'd in her Prime, she nevertheless enjoys above that which infinitely excells all which is valuable and glorious here. 'Tis unknown to us what we may have to go thro' on Earth; but those in Heaven are secur'd for ever from all the Snares and Storms which abound in this lower World.

And this Consideration can't but administer especial Comfort to the Relations of the Person deceas'd, for it affords the most supporting Reason for Submission to the Divine Will. Death may separate us for the present; but if *we are the Lord's*, Rom.xiv. he will restore us one to the other, to our unspeakable Joy: For if our Relations and Friends are so dear to us in this imperfect State, how acceptable will they appear to us when deck'd with all the Lustres of Glory and consummate Virtue? When the Bodies, which are now possess'd of Corruption, and moulder'd into Dust, shall rise again every way so pure, endearing and compleat, as transcends all possible Imagination: Even like the splendid Body of our Lord in Beauty, who is the highest Exemplar of Glory, as well as the brightest Pattern of Grace.

I will conclude the whole with this solemn Advice, That you would all, without any farther Delay, prepare your selves for your latter End; since we know not who of us may prove the next particular Instance of the Truth of this universal Affirmation, *That all Flesh is Grass, and all the Goodness thereof is as the Flower of the Field.*

F I N I S.

Mr. Johnson's Book

of the book or name given has
been printed on the back cover
as well as on the title page.
The title page is as follows:



31 MAY

